



MDN Weekly Update - Jan 22, 2012: Should the EPA Butt Out of Dimock?

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Last week's MDN poll asked when you believe shale gas drilling will begin in New York State. An interesting result, with 65% who believe it will begin either this year or next year, but 35% who believe it will never happen.

When do you think Marcellus Shale drilling in New York State will begin?

2012 (30%, 78 Votes)
2013 (35%, 89 Votes)
Never (35%, 89 Votes)

Total Voters: 256

This Week's Poll: Does the EPA have a role in investigating the Dimock, PA water contamination case?

Begin rant.

MDN has written numerous times about the federal Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) propensity to stick it's nose into affairs properly handled by the individual states. Specifically, the EPA wants to regulate oil and gas drilling nationwide, a responsibility that constitutionally belongs to states, not the federal government. But the EPA is not content to leave it alone, so they are looking for ways to insert themselves into the drilling debate by latching onto any excuse.

The latest excuse is Dimock, Pennsylvania. In brief, Cabot Oil & Gas was found by the Pennsylvania DEP to have caused (or made worse) methane migration into the water wells for 19 families in the Dimock area, and ordered to provide water deliveries to those households, install methane mitigation systems, and pay homeowners twice the value of their homes. Eight of the

families accepted that settlement, but 11 families have said a) their water is contaminated with more than just methane, they say it also contains chemicals from fracking, and b) they want a LOT more money. It's payday honey! Let's soak the drilling company. So those families have refused the settlement, but want Cabot to keep delivering water for as long as it takes to sue them into eternity.

The PA DEP said "enough" and told Cabot they can suspend water deliveries (that have now gone on for years) to those households that refuse the more-than-fair settlement. Cabot did stop the deliveries at the end of November, and the media went into overdrive covering the story of how that nasty Cabot pulled the rug out from under those poor, helpless families that can't even get a cup o' water.

Enter the EPA. They have now wedged their fat derriere at the table and have demanded to be part of the "ongoing" investigation. At first they told the families, "the data looks good to us, there is no problem." Then they said, "wait, there's missing data in them thar files." They promised to restart deliveries of water themselves, then welched on the promise within 24 hours. Then said they changed their minds again and would start deliveries of water for four of the families. Whew. Can anyone say "flaky"?

Where we stand now: The EPA is going to conduct their own tests of water wells in Dimock, and in the meantime is supposed to have restarted water deliveries to four families.

The monstrosity that is the EPA was created in 1970 by then-President Richard Nixon. Rue the day. It was created for a noble purpose, "To protect human health and the environment." The problem is, like with all government agencies, it tends to overstep its bounds. Just because they can throw their considerable weight around, doesn't mean they should. And it certainly doesn't mean they can just grab power that constitutionally belongs to the states. But that's just what they are trying to do.

End rant.

This week's poll asks, should the EPA investigate the Dimock water contamination case? Register your vote on the right side of any page.

Below are the most recent "top 5" lists and the calendar of Marcellus-related events for the next two weeks.

Happy reading,
Jim Willis, Editor

P.S. MDN is working on a new permits report that will be published soon (in February). Keep watching MDN for details in the coming weeks. This new report is better than the last by orders of magnitude!